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70 years ago

## Editorial

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 றைைo றணேகృమ！（Rest and Refreshment）．றs

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 வமூ கைら！（Provision in the wilderness）．

 णノmb（Companion in the journey）．๑๐கஇிळ



 the end of the journey）．

＂His love has no limit，His grace has no measure， His power no boundary known unto men， For out of His infinite riches in Jesus， He giveth and giveth and giveth again．＂















He is ever Loving God，He is ever Living God
He is so near，so dear and so real a God．





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 வறชఁఁ 'Everything Happens for a Reason'

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"We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day." - Edith Lovejoy Pears

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## Solitary Walk-5 <br> Fr. Dr. K.M. George

## The Tail-gazing Fish



The ancient Egyptian symbol of Ouroburos or the Taildevourer is the image of a snake that eats its own tail. It represents the end and the beginning of everything. In unending repeated cycles of death and rebirth, destruction and reconstruction, decay and renewal, the image of the taileating serpent probably emerged from the ever repeating cycles of nature. It implies eternity and perfection.

Later the Greeks adopted it as the symbol of time and history. Everything goes in circles. "What goes around comes around", says old wisdom.

The ancient Indian concept of repeating Yugas expresses a similar cyclic world-view. Even modern historiography doesn't completely deny the wise saying that history repeats itself.

In mainstream cosmology today, the Big Bang and the Big Crunch are part of our scientific "mythology". Space, time and everything in it began at a singularity point, some 13.7 billion years ago, and might end
in a Big Crunch at another singularity point (only to begin anew the whole cycle).

Then there is the linear view of history - the concept of the straight line. According to this there is a beginning point and an end point for the whole universe and everything in it. History moves from the starting point to the end point thus making it a line.

There is also the spiral view that combines the cyclic and the linear. The wheel, for example, has a cyclic motion that repeats itself. But it can also make a linear progress on the ground as when a wheeled vehicle moves ahead.

Rituals and belief systems of all religions seem to be shaped to a great extent by their notion of

time - cyclic, linear, spiral or their combinations in different degrees.

In the picture attached, the artist represents in a rather surrealistic way a puzzled fish that beholds its own picturesque tail. The tail can stand for the collective past, the total heritage, the complex history. It can also suggest the last part of the fish's body far behind the head, representing all those who are socially ignored, underestimated or looked down upon as worthless and mean.

Yet the tail acts as the rudder of the fish for its twists and turns, and thus has a critical role to play in its body movements. The head swollen with self-confidence for the future may not properly recognise the value and wisdom of the tail end. In any critical transition and manoeuvring necessitated by a pandemic or natural catastrophe the tail shows its inevitable
importance.
In the picture, faced with a change of age, the fish-head gazes at the colourful tail , may be for the first time, and together they assure the integrity of the fish-body.

As we finish a year of untold distress and darkness for humanity, and transit with cautious optimism to a hopefully brighter age, let all proud heads turn around and gaze at the humble tails - in economics, politics, family and society in general. Let us reconstitute the one body that is fragmented. Let us not devour our tails as in the myth of Ouroburos, but unfold them in all their multi-potential colours. Then there is some hope for a just world economy, a peaceful geopolitical order, joyful family bonds and true happiness that we all seek in a New Year.



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| Kingdom of God -1 |
| :---: |
| Dr. T. Jacob John |

## Starting a new series: The Kingdom of God



## The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

'When clouds fly across the sky, shade and sunshine take their turns confusion and clarity likewise take their turns
when thoughts on the kingdom of God turn to meditations.'

The Kingdom of God is the major theme throughout the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus himself left it for our meditation, to figure out the breadth and depth of the concept and content of the phrase, the kingdom of God - and then to adapt it in our personal lives and our community life. We, as members of various churches, have not done full justice to the mission and commission to understand first, to teach next, and to practise citizenship in the kingdom of God. We need to realign our faith in Jesus with His gospel of the kingdom of God.

There are layers of meanings, and we have to grasp fully the centrality of the good news, which is the kingdom of God. What exactly is the good news in the Bible? Are there not several good newses? How do we balance various priorities in the spectrum of all those good newses, salvation and God's grace, for example? St. Paul spoke to the believers of Miletus and of Ephesus, about the "ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Jesus was a keen observer of Nature and humans. His parables are testimony to His imagination to deduce lessons from ordinary events and to construct parables. Some parables were with single focus and others with more than one - the story of the 'prodigal son' has two individuals in focus, the younger brother and the elder, both of whom the father loved. The parable of the 'good Samaritan' is stinging on the priest and the Levite, while attention was on the victim of dacoits and the Samaritan. Those days there was no paper, no printing, and oral tradition of passing on messages and stories was prevalent. Books were written on parchment. They were rare, mostly found in synagogues, highly valued and safely kept.

Jesus was thorough with the scriptures of His religion by birth, Judaism - Old Testament Judaism. Jesus knew the power of the written word. Jesus declared that there was a new way emerging from the old, since the path-breaking work of John the Baptist -- a transformation, change of direction, revolution, revival, spiritual growth, turning faith upside down, from "do as you are told" as in the old religion to "you figure things out for yourselves". Was that not evident when the early church leaders named the new scripture the New Testament (Covenant), and the
scripture under which John the Baptist preached and baptised, the Old Testament?

A new patch should not be stitched on to an old shirt and new wine should not be put in an old wineskin. The old and the new have their places. Arguments from the old shall not contradict the new. If the new is reinforced by the old, accept it. The new is the correct interpretation of the old, with new insight. And that insight itself is good news.

Then why did Jesus not write a book, to clarify everything, but left it to his followers to figure things out and decide what to write and when? He did not even ask the learned among the disciples to write - John the thinker and Matthew the accounting expert, let alone Thomas the carpenter-builder and the fishermen. Just as well - I shudder to think what would have happened if there was some material written by Jesus.

If He wrote, that would have been appropriate for that time in human history, and for that community, culture and religion and ipso facto inappropriate in different times, places, languages and cultures. His teachings had to be, and are, appropriate for all times and for all people. That His teachings resonate and get preached and practised in all cultures throughout human history since then, itself is a great sign. The rigidity of the written word would have shackled our freedom to figure things out, the fundamental principle of being human, and the basic principle of our ability for changing course, for repentance.

With hindsight we can be sure that nothing else was appropriate for a true avatar of God, to borrow the concept from our culture that we are all familiar with, in India. The difference is that the true
avatar is historical, one time, for the entire humanity, for all time, and not just for one contemporary context and for a limited need. Not for supporting some good people and punishing some evil ones, for which, incarnation had to be repetitive - sambhavami yuge yuge
 once, but thereafter everyone should have equal access to the avatar.

Indian sages had obviously figured out that avatar was the only way for us humans to know for sure the reality, and the 'mind' of God, and to glimpse the true glory of God. How partly correct and philosophically admirable, their deduction was. In that case, avatar had to be factual, for which it had to be historical. Through the avatar, we know that God is not exactly what humans had figured out God to be through deep thinking and reading of scriptures as for India, so for Israel. Yet, after the avatar we still need to think deep and meditate, and study the records made available to us. Faith is essential, but is it sufficient?

Do we not now see that the choice not to write was deliberate, not by default, but by design? Jesus was laying the foundations of a revolutionary 'new way', of which 'religion' is an inadequate word to define, but much needed to evolve from it, built upon it and furthered by what followed historically. So we are made to depend on: the written gospels and early history of the new way for facts, St. Paul for guru-like exposition, the Holy Spirit for guidance, and meditations to measure up.
(To be continued)
The author is a renowned virologist, retired from the faculty of the Christian Medical College, Vellore.

# Prima Donna and Programmatic Approaches in Scientific Research 



## Preface

COVID -19, ravaging the world now has infected about a hundred million people and claimed almost two million lives. Intensive researches to combat the virus carried out in many countries with the support of governments and private agencies have come to fruition with the development of vaccines. In this context, it will be interesting to examine the history of scourges that ravaged the world in the past and how we overcame them.

The four biggest killer diseases in the history of the human race are malaria, tuberculosis, smallpox and plague. Malaria is caused by a parasite, tuberculosis and plague by bacteria and smallpox by a virus. All of them together claimed more than fifty billion lives. The major killers of our time are cardiovascular diseases, cancer and AIDS. About ten million people died of cancer in 2019 alone. The death toll due to AIDS is thirtysix million till date. The Spanish flu of 1918-20 infected 500 million people, about half of the world's population and killed 50 million people.

We succeeded in bringing them under control by developing cures and vaccines, improving sanitation and providing better health care and nutrition. The cures and vaccines were the result of either serendipitous discoveries by Prima Donna scientists or Programmatic research sponsored by governments or multinational companies.

Vaccines for COVID-19 were developed through Programmatic research which involved huge manpower, large inflow of funds and highly sophisticated technologies. It is amazing that these vaccines reached the market within a short span of one year whereas in the past, it took ten to twelve years on an average to develop cures and vaccines for diseases through programmatic research and even longer through Prima Donna research. This short span of time has raised concerns among the general pubiic and in the scientific community regarding the efficacy and side effects of these vaccines. In this context, it will be edifying to examine the history, methodology and logistics of Prima Donna and Programmatic approaches to scientific research especially in the development of new drugs.

## 1. Introduction

The word research is derived from the Middle French "recherche", which means "to go about seeking". The earliest recorded use of the term was in 1577.

Significant scientific discoveries in the past, especially before World War II, came from those who " went about seeking". They were loners motivated in their pursuit of personal curiosity. In the public perception they were undisciplined persons working as and when they were motivated. They were temperamental, incapable of working under direction and as part of a
team, wide eyed and wild haired. (If Einstein's visage comes to our mind, it is only natural.) Their discoveries made advances in science which in turn created new technologies and changed the fundamentals of the way we live, what we eat and drink, how we travel and how we connect with each other and even how long we live. Such a person is called a Prima Donna scientist.

Prima Donna is a term borrowed from opera, and in opera a Prima Donna (Italian for first lady) is the leading female singer in the company, the person to whom prime roles would be given. Prime donne often had grand off-stage personalities and were seen as demanding of their colleagues. From its original usage in opera, the term has spread in contemporary usage to refer to persons who behave in a demanding or temperamental fashion revealing an inflated view of themselves, their talent, and their importance, but whose contributions are essential to the success of a team. These scientists never organised, planned or directed research the way military SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics team set up to carry out a high risk operation beyond the capabilities of ordinary officers in the force) teams do or industrial laboratories do.

Research has now taken on a broader meaning. It is "creative and systematic work undertaken to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humans, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications." It is used to establish or confirm facts, reaffirm the results of previous work, solve new or existing problems, support theorems, or develop new theories. A research project may also be an expansion on past work in the field.

This definition gives rise to the idea of
directed and targeted research or Programmatic Research which was implemented for the first time during World War II. The governments in war wanted new weapons and technologies to aid soldiers in the battle field. Basic research - diffuse and open ended enquiring on fundamental questions - was a luxury of peace time. The war demanded something more urgent and goal- directed. The Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) created in 1941 by the US government recruited scientists performing basic research into projects that emphasised Programmatic Research and they wrought about astounding technological magic.

Politicians and administrators every where, especially in the developing countries, in their concern for improving the lot of the people root for programmatic research which they hope will bring immediate results. Kerala is no different. In fact the idea for this article came from a news paper report a decade ago. Smt. P. K. Sreemati, the Minister for Health in the V.S. Achuthanandan Ministry, while addressing a conclave of students in Trivandrum, exhorted them to do research to improve the living conditions of the poor. Mr. M. A. Baby, the then Minister for Education, who was also present, concurred with her views. The ministers were stressing the need for social commitment in research. Whether they meant it or not, they were advocating the cause of programmatic research.

Before we go into the merits and demerits of Prima Donna and Programmatic Research and pass judgments, let us try to understand how the two work, by examining the history and dynamics of past scientific discoveries and technological innovations.
(To be continued)

# Or:. Thefoms AND INSIGHTS 



A theologian, a philosopher, and a biologist were asked what each of them considered to be the most important story people need to know. The theologian said that the most important story was salvation through God's grace. The philosopher disagreed, saying that the most important story for mankind was that of Enlightenment. The biologist knew that he was supposed to say "evolution". But evolution is the consequence of another more fundamental story. So the biologist claimed that the most inspirational and meaningful story was how the embryo constructs itself how from a single cell a complex organism develops.

Being trained as a biologist myself, I am partial to the developmental biologist's view point, as also I am constantly amazed by some of the intricate details of development. See for yourselves what I mean: The developing organism, between fertilization and birth, is known as an embryo. The embryo is a staggering phenomenon. As an embryo you had to build yourself from a single cell; you had to respire before you had lungs, take in nutrients before you had a gut, build bones while you were squishy, and form orderly arrays of neurons before you knew how to think! One of the differences between you and a machine is that a machine is never required to function until after it is built. Every multicellular organism, on the other hand, has to function
even as it builds itself. Many human embryos die before being born. We survived!

It is quite true, however, that all three answers given by the participants are valid and important. Depending on your training and inclination, you will discover profound insights in any of them. These viewpoints not only ignite our curiosity and imagination, but also influence our thought processes, our perception of the world, and even our understanding of spiritual matters. The ramifications of each of the three participants' conclusion may not be obvious to the layman easily, but given suitable analogies, the layman may quickly grasp the implications. And this ability to elucidate weighty concepts in a form that can easily be comprehended is really a gift possessed by a minority. Jesus was a master of this art. The Scripture records that Jesus taught profound truths to his followers through parables - using simple, everyday events and quite familiar objects. His parables of the leaven, the treasure hid in the ground, expensive pearl etc. helped his hearers understand the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Dr. Paul Brand, the renowned handsurgeon and pioneer in leprosy research, along with the noted Christian writer Philip Yancey, has written two remarkable and highly engaging books, namely, 'Fearfully
and Wonderfully Made', and 'In His Image'. In the pages of these books Dr. Brand examines the structure and functions of the human body and evokes very fascinating and inspirational spiritual insights from them. In the preface to 'Fearfully and Wonderfully Made', coauthor Yancey says: "Someone attempting to describe the colour scarlet to a person born blind declared, 'it's like the sound of a trumpet'. In a sense, metaphorical symbols are the only way for us to grasp spiritual truths, which explains why the Bible uses them so lavishly".

In this article, I would like to highlight a very insightful analogy used by Charles W. Price, a widely respected Bible teacher and popular speaker who worked primarily among the youngsters in the UK.

In his book, 'Christ for Real', Price talks about what it means to be "In Christ". This is, incidentally, a key concept stressed upon by the Apostle Paul. Every new day brings its outworking of the purposes of God, and they are accomplished through people, and that too through ordinary people. The ordinary person is intended by Jesus Christ to be the very vehicle of his working. Jesus is willing to work through any person who is willing to let him. In John 15, Jesus talks about himself being the vine, and his disciples the branches. He says, "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (verses 5,6).

The Church is not an organization, but an organism, a living unit, the members
being united together by the indwelling life of Jesus Christ. The event of Christ coming to live within us, and we coming to be in Him, is a simultaneous event.

To illustrate this concept, Price uses one of the marvels of medicine, namely, microsurgery. Microsurgery is the process whereby severed fingers, arms or legs are stitched back into place so that they are able to function as near to normal as possible. He is narrating a widely publicised incident which happened a few years ago in England.

A farmer had been bailing up some loose straw in one of his fields. All of a sudden, his machine jammed. He quickly dismounted the tractor, leaving the machinery running, and put his hand into the bailer to remove the cause of the problem. However, as he did so, his arm got caught, pulled in to the machine, and was severed in a clean cut above the elbow!

Anyway, with tremendous presence of mind, he picked up the severed arm and walked one third of a mile to the nearest house and knocked on the door (We do not know which hand he used!). The lady of the house telephoned for an ambulance. In the meantime, she packed his arm in all the available ice she could get from her deep freezer and refrigerator. The ambulance arrived, took the man and his arm to hospital, and during a lengthy surgery the arm was painstakingly stitched back into place. His severed arm was now re-attached to his body, and eventually his arm resumed its normal functioning.

When his arm was re-attached, two things happened simultaneously. The arm
(Continued on page 33)

# The Speck in <br> Your Brother's Eye 



Matt. 7:3 - "Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (RSV)

Many of us are quick to see the 'speck' or the shortcomings in other people's nature and behaviour which are often rather insignificant, while we turn a blind eye to the shortcomings in our own nature and behaviour which may be of a more serious kind and which other people may easily notice. Why should someone else tell us what's wrong with us? Can't we look at ourselves more critically? Well, we may need a little training to do that.

How do we train ourselves to do this? Training of any sort would mean conscious effort - effort put in deliberately and also consistently; this would need a tremendous lot of determination, and that is what many people don't have. Determination is a cultivated virtue cultivated only if one sees the need for it.

Is it necessary to look at ourselves critically? You feel embarrassed when somebody else points out something undesirable in your behaviour; it would be worse if that somebody refrained from pointing it out to you, but showed some restraints in his behaviour towards you.

You are likely to sense it and to feel hurt about it. So it is important to be able to look at oneself critically; one has to deliberately put in the effort needed, so that one is enabled to maintain the right kinds of relationships with others.

The first step in this direction would be to check yourself when you tend to look at somebody else critically; train yourself to turn that critical eye towards your own self. For example, don't be too quick to tell yourself or another person how selfish somebody else is. Wait a minute before you pass that judgement on another person; take a while to search your own mind to see if you have this trait in your own character. If you are honest, you will be amazed to see how selfish you have been in your dealings with other people. It is natural for human beings to put their own interests before those of others in their dealings; only with deliberate training one is enabled to put other people's interests first. Well, one has to feel the need, and cultivate the determination required, to train oneself
(Continued on page 29)

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KITCHEN ${ }^{m}$ TREASURES


Most of us teenagers feel that the life of a teenager is too hard. It is often filled with stress, tension, fights, arguments, etc. For some of us who have siblings, the problem is the worst, especially in the form of partiality from the side of the parents, teachers and elders - though not from all. This can make us feel 'left alone' - lonely in the crowd! This can cause mental depression, and even lead to extreme thoughts like committing suicide. This is not a joke, but a fact!

There are a few ways to overcome this situation. Parents who have two or more
kids must take care of them equally. The elder children should not be pressurised or penalised for anything and everything. Even when there is a need to correct someone, they shall not use harsh words; when giving advice, they should be patient and friendly. Give them the freedom to do their work by themselves, but remember to spend some quality time with the children.

These, I believe, are some of the ways to solve the common problems faced by us teenagers.
(Contd. from page 27)
this way; here lies the first step to be taken.

Putting a check on one's selfishness is a commendable beginning to make. If one develops the habit of turning into oneself before looking at others critically, one should begin to see other traits like selfishness in one's own character. 'The logs' in one's own eyes will certainly get reduced in size considerably; they may become 'specks.' And there may come a time when you are able to see 'the specks' in your own eyes; moreover, you may begin to overlook completely, or at least take a kindly view of 'the specks' in other people's eyes. One feels tempted to think
that this is what our Lord had in mind when he raised that question in his sermon on the mount, as recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew Ch. 7, v. 3, and quoted at the beginning of this article.

This is a very positive approach to personal relationships in a community. Anything of a positive nature is always welcome. A negative attitude begets problems. By being positive we can improve our own physical and mental health. Most people's health problems, both physical and mental, are created by a negative approach to matters. If you try to look less critically at others but more critically at yourself, you will begin to feel more healthy in body, mind and soul. ©

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## TENURE: 1 YEAR TO 5 YEARS

# Jesus Revealed Gad as Lave 

God is infinite Love - unconditional, indescribable, impartial, above all unchanging. However, man's concept of God changed with time. Abraham's concept was different from that of Moses; the Prophets too had different concepts. Ultimately Jesus Christ, the son of God, showed what God is like. Jesus revealed the triune God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus (the Son] is the mind of God (the Father), from where thoughts emanate to become powerful words; e.g. "Let there be light", and there was light. (This is 'Big Bang', the beginning of the Universe.) Therefore, the Son is called the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1]

What Jesus Christ spoke and is recorded in the gospels is called the written Word of God. So also the rest of the New Testament is inspired by the Holy Spirit. As far as the Old Testament is concerned it cannot be entirely taken as the Word of God. Of course, those books were also inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, there are many passages and incidents which are not for emulation by us, but recorded as a warning for us to keep off, howsoever truthfully they are recorded. In a sense the Old Testament is the shadow and the New Testament the substance. Many prophecies about Christ in the Old

Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament. There is a golden thread of Salvation connecting Genesis to Revelation.

Since God is Love, He does not punish the sinner. At the most, God disciplines His children when they go astray. His Son has already taken the punishment on the Cross. The sinner punishes himself by selfinduced separation from the fellowship of God. This is spiritual death. For God is holy and He cannot, by His very nature, have fellowship with unholiness. The antidote for this spiritual death of a sinner is to accept Jesus as his personal Saviour. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins." The sinner has to come back like the Prodigal Son in Jesus' parable.

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## (Contd. from page 26)

received the life of the body, and at the same time the body received the arm. When the arm had been severed it was lifeless. You could tickle its palm or tweak its fingers and get no response! You could tread on its thumb and it would not react. To all intents and purposes it was dead. This, of course, is the condition you and I would be in when we become separated from God.

As the arm was re-attached to the body, the success of the operation was measured by the return of life to the arm. Life returned to the arm at the precise moment that the arm was returned to the body, for the life in the arm was the life of the body. The hospital staff, despite their great skill and expertise, could not put life into the severed arm first, as a separate operation, while the rest of the man sat outside in the waiting room having a cup of tea! Then, having successfully got the arm to come alive, call him in and stitch the living arm back on to the body in a subsequent surgery. It would be impossible! In the same way, spiritual new birth cannot be detached from our baptism by the Holy Spirit into Christ. The imparting of His life to us is simultaneous with the incorporation of our lives into His body. We become His body at the same time that He becomes our life. The two events cannot be separated.

This beautiful analogy further points to how God fulfils His purpose in this world. Jesus said in John 15: 1-4, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful... Remain in me, and I will remain
in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

When Jesus started telling parables to the people, His disciples asked the obvious question, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (Matthew 13:10). Jesus' answer to the question was quite revealing (verses 11-14). He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them... This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them."

Analogies thus help to explain or clarify concepts. When things get unclear, we often reach around for analogies from apparently alien but secretly sympathetic domains. Being endowed with a rational intellect, it is only natural that we, at moments of ambiguity, look out for patterns, processes or phenomena in another discipline that might shed a little more light on our problem. And as Christians, what better place to look to than the Bible? Knotty theological, philosophical, or scientific concepts turn delectable and lucid through analogies, and no doubt, analogies help cement the organic relationship that exists among the people of God as well.


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## River Jordan and The Dead Sea



My visit to the Holy Land was four years ago. I felt pity about the general barren nature of the land, but the pomegranates and the dates were really amazing. Commerce has overpowered devotion, but still it is our devotion that prompts us to visit the Holy Land. The River Jordan and the Dead Sea remain a lesson in life.

As you may know, the flowing river is very clean and clear. We can see the bottom of the river in shallow places where we can step down. On the contrary, the Dead Sea remains stagnant, the salt content is very high, and we can even float on it; but a person with a wound or cut cannot enter the water as it is highly toxic. Whereas the River Jordan caters to our devotion, the Dead Sea is mainly commercial being the source of raw materials for Cosmetics Industry.
This river and the sea percolate into our life and remind me of some people who amass wealth by fair or foul means. Some people collect and spend; this is like the River Jordan. Some others go on amassing wealth, without even spending for themselves, and become stagnant like the Dead Sea. Accumulation of wealth is also of two types: Some people remain content with normal and legal growth of assets whereas mostly those who make quick money and fast accumulation resort to foul means, even swallowing what is due to others.

We wonder at the financial growth of some rich people at lightning speed; but we do witness the fall of some of them during their life-time itself. We cannot say all rich people are happy, and we come to know about their real life once they end their life enroute. Some people pretend to be rich on the strength of "liabilities" and "speculations" but nobody knows when the bubble will burst.

A bigger danger is awaiting those who prefer digital saving, since all digital evidences are with some other agencies and the investors don't have any record in writing with them. With all the conveniences and precautions offered by the digital world, the chances of losing track are very high. The next generation for whom they make all the savings will never know it because of obvious communication gap.
The flowing Jordan reminds me of the "Good Samaritan" who helped an unknown person in misery. When Jesus Christ got "five loaves and two fish" he multiplied it and gave to the multitude without keeping even one loaf for himself. Finally he gave his own flesh and blood as the ultimate sacrifice, and rose to greater heights where death has no power.
In this New Year, let our charity flow out like the River Jordan. King Solomon says, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due when it is in the power of thy hand to do it" (Proverbs $3: 27$ ). This calls for a willingness to share what is yours, and sharing is much above charity. Sharing gives happiness to the giver and taker alike. If we decide to start spending only after accumulating as much as possible, we will never give, since by then we would have become a Dead Sea! So let's start spending as we earn. Don't think of 'charity' since charity keeps you 'up' and the beneficiary 'down'! Please translate it as 'sharing', where the giver and the taker are on the same level. As Jesus said, you are acknowledging the neighbour as yourself. In the year 2020, the fear of Covid brought us close. In the year 2021, may the sprit of sharing bring us closer.


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